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THE CHIROPOTAMUS.

No place in the English metropolis has more charms than the Gardens of the Zoological Society. The Surrey Gardens, Vauxhall, Cremorne, beside them hide their diminished heads. At any rate, in the one you are seldom disgusted as you are in the others. You are not bewildered by the fantastic costume of London gents; you are not surrounded by painted women and drunken men. Between you and nature comes no offensive cloud, but you can walk and examine and philosophise at your own sweet will. You add something to your stock of knowledge, and if you be a wise man, you carry away that which is better than knowledge itself, for

"Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things,
We murder to dissect."

The gardens are now peculiarly rich in curious pachydermatous animals. The young elephant and her portly mamma are alone worth a visit to them, although the former, under the fattening influence of cakes and bonbons, has now grown to such a size that the attributes of babyhood are fast giving place to those of the mature elephant. The elephant calf, or little elephant—now only by courtesy—is already a proficient in the ways of the elephant world, an adept in the arts of begging and cajoling, mistress of all the winning blandishments wherewith the elephant tribe are wont to solicit eleemosynary donations from their Christian friends.

Wandering along in quest of the other pachyderms, we next meet with the armour-encased rhinoceros—a beast which naturalists describe as unamiable, stupid, and sulky. We think naturalists are wrong in their description—at least the character does not apply to our friend the rhinoceros in the Zoological Gardens. The humanising influence of delicate food and polite society has evidently not been lost upon him. Instead of avoiding the visitor, he stalks towards him, pushes his large nose between the bars of his enclosure as far as he can, and solicits, in his own peculiar fashion, the donation of a morsel. He is not so adroit a beggar as our friends the elephants, but he does his best. At first he tries what the significant hint of throwing his mouth wide open will do, and this failing, he protrudes a sort of an apology for the elephant's snout. The latter, however, is but a sorry substitute; it may answer well enough for rooting up trees, but it is not able to accomplish those delicate *manipulations*—if the expression may be permitted—which are performed by the trunk of the elephant. We next pass on to the illustrious stranger who divided the attention of the *beau monde* some little time since with the Nepalese ambassador. We mean the hippopotamus, of course. Since we had the honour of seeing him last, he, too, has grown amazingly—his body rather than his intellectual powers, we fear. He is very little humanised as yet, does not even understand the art of begging, which backwardness is a proof of the possession of very obtuse mental capacities, we take it; and judging from external appearances, it would seem that he considers his mission is to sleep. As the hippopotamus displays no winning ways for our amusement, we leave this pet of fashion and pass on to the enclosure wherein resides the chiropotamus, as he is termed, the pachyderm which we have especially come to see.

Meantime a few preliminary remarks may not be out of place on pachydermatous animals in general, and the chiropotamus in particular. The term pachyderm, or pachydermatous animal, then, means a thick-skinned animal—from *παχύς* thick, and *δέρμα*, a skin, and includes the elephant, horse, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, the swine, and many others possessing a general similarity to these. It is true the thickness of skin in the so-called pachyderms is, in the greater number of genera, an important characteristic. Not an invariable characteristic, however, seeing that a horse's skin is not thick; but as regards the elephant, rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and pig, the propriety of the term will not be questioned. The pachydermatous class admits of division into

animals with *proboscides*, or prehensile snouts, and animals without. The former contains the elephant amongst living genera, and the mastodon amongst dead ones. As regards the pachyderms without prehensile snouts, they are subdivided into families, according to the number, or rather the apparent number, of their toes.

Now, although it be quite true that the elephant alone, of all living pachyderms, has a prehensile trunk, properly so called, yet a sort of attempt at this conformation exists in many others:—thus, for example, our friend the rhinoceros has a sort of prolongation of the upper lip, moveable like a thumb, and very useful for the general purposes of tearing up roots, moving earth in search of food, and other similar purposes. The pig, too, has a snout of great strength and mobility, as the farmer often knows to his cost. A few hungry porkers turned loose in a meadow soon plough the turf through and through, in their search for roots and worms.

We now arrive at the residence of the chiropotamus, or river pig, which name he acquires from *χοῖρος*, a swine, and *ποταμός*, a river, and a very appropriate name it is, seeing that he is so exactly pig-like in form and face. What the animal is in appearance, the engraving alone will show. What he is, so far as is known, we will endeavour to tell. The interesting animal has been in this country about six months, and is a great curiosity, for none of his brethren have ever had the felicity of treading on British ground before. It is said the slave becomes free immediately he touches our shores. Alas! the river hog, or chiropotamus, found our boast a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. In slavery he has been ever since he was torn from Africa and the Cameron river, on the banks of which he was born, and where it may be supposed he reasonably anticipated to spend in quiet the little span of time we call life. Alas! fate had another destiny in store for him. He was to be caught—borne far away over oceans to a strange land, to be gazed at by strange eyes, to be spoken of by strange tongues. A hog of any ambition might find in this some consolation—I question whether our friend does. It matters little to him that artists engrave him; that newspaper paragraphs trumpet his praise; that the British public runs after him as it did after Father Gavazzi or Mrs. Stowe.

The chiropotamus is a denizen of the Guinea Coast of Western Africa, where he spends his time in the rivers and on the river banks of that sultry, swampy region. The specimen now in the Zoological Gardens is about the size of an ordinary pig. The most distinctive character of the animal, to the eye of a general observer, is its colour, a bright maroon, verging on yellow. It may be here well to remark, that the term chiropotamus has only recently been applied to an existing animal; it was long employed to designate certain fossil remains of a pachyderm of the swine tribe, the bones of which are frequently met with in the neighbourhood of Paris, and the Isle of Wight.

It is strange the public has not heard of the chiropotamus before, when we consider the industry and enterprise with which the world has been searched. It is, we are informed, also found in some of the other rivers of Western Africa, and although it has hitherto escaped the grasp of scientific naturalists, has long been known to the merchant explorers of those mysterious streams. Its nearest analogy is the Bosch Vaik of the Cape, an animal so scarce that we missed it from Gordon Cummings's African museum. So remarkable a character is it, that it is almost incredible that it should for so long a time have escaped the numerous correspondents of the Zoological Society, whose labours have been so unwearied and have generally been crowned with such success. Now it has reached England, the least the public can do is to welcome it. It will never attain to the popularity of the hippopotamus, for it cannot vie with that deservedly public favourite in size; but it is equally rare, equally strange to untravelling eyes; and as novelty is an attraction, for some time to come we imagine that the river hog will be attractive indeed.



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